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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000942

SIPDIS

STATE FOR ECA/PE/C/CU; NEA/PPD (David Benze); R; NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OEXC](#) [SCUL](#) [KPAO](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: KUWAIT REQUESTS PARTICIPATION IN THE RHYTHM ROAD AMERICAN MUSIC ABROAD PROGRAM'S NEW SEASON

REF: State 090853

SUMMARY

1. (U): Embassy Kuwait requests participation in the Rhythm Road American Music Abroad Program during the winter of 2009, preferably at the end of January. This year, we would like to host a Country and Western, or Bluegrass quartet, for a total of three programming days. Our audience will consist of important contacts of the Mission, participants in our various youth programs (such as ACCESS and YES), alumni of our citizen exchange programs, local educators, professionals, as well as local musicians and music aficionados. End summary.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

2. (U) We propose a three-day program, not counting travel days, that would feature the group on the first day performing in a combined jam session with local musicians, at a venue that might also include some of our U.S. military personnel, either in the audience or on the stage; with the last two days of the Kuwait leg of the tour devoted to one public concert on each evening, and a morning visit to a local high school on each day. The timing of the event is important to us as January 31 is the anniversary of the murder at the hands of Al-Qaeda of American journalist Daniel Pearl, a personal friend of our Ambassador, who would like us to use the performances to memorialize this event. The Hawthorn Hotel, the site of our very successful performances of the Exegesis Jazz Band last year, will be the public venue. Our preferred days for the concerts would be Wednesday, January 28 to Friday, January 30. If these dates are not available, we would like to schedule the group on the same days of the week, as close to the end of January time frame as possible.

KUWAIT MSP GOAL NO. 4: EXPAND PROFESSIONAL AND SOCIAL TIES BASED ON SHARED CORE VALUES

3. (U) Because of objections by religious conservatives, public musical performances have long been a sensitive issue in Kuwait. Heretofore, Post has tried various expedients to put them before Kuwaiti audiences, such as organizing sudden appearances in the shopping malls or hosting them at private residences, but for the first time last year, with the Exegesis Jazz Quartet, we programmed a musical group in a local hotel, in a nineteenth-floor venue that, with its spectacular panoramic views of the Kuwait City skyline, was reminiscent of a western-style jazz club experience. This year, we want to repeat this experience with a Country and Western or Bluegrass quartet. In particular, we hope to expand the desire of ordinary Kuwaitis for a more relaxed public atmosphere in which musical performances can be openly appreciated as well as encourage those Kuwaitis who have already gone out on a limb for this cause. At our last Rhythm Road event, several Kuwaitis familiar with American music expressed great interest in Country and Western or Bluegrass music for the next tour.

INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE

4. (U) We were able to attract about ninety young people from the

ACCESS English-language program to the last Rhythm Road event and are optimistic that we can do so again. These are 14-16 year old high school students from less advantaged backgrounds who live in the outlying areas of Kuwait. As youth under the age of twenty-five comprise about sixty percent of Kuwait's population, reaching this audience while also engaging educators and those who influence youth, will allow us to amplify the program's message of cross cultural empathy among the next generation of Kuwaitis who have no personal memory of the American-led liberation of Kuwait in 1991.

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INVOLVING LOCAL MUSICIANS
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15. (U) Last year's Exegesis Jazz Band event was very successful because the performers demonstrated their interest in learning about the culture of Kuwait and the important role that music plays in its traditions. We hope that the joint session we are planning on day one will make the same point. Involving local musicians in a "jam-session" or consecutively interspersed "sets" with our visiting quartet would allow us to promote the notion that Americans are interested in new styles of music from the Arab world and thereby encourage a reciprocating intercultural empathy on the Kuwaiti side. Presenting these types of musical events, which are always well-attended by Kuwaitis, will thus allow us to continue to break down the anti-western cultural bias of conservatives within our host country.

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INVOLVING U.S TROOPS
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16. (U) Post is also considering ways to encourage more cultural interfacing between the U.S. troops based in Kuwait and the local population. We are hopeful that we can find a way to use this program to showcase some of the musical talent in the Country and

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Western or Bluegrass tradition that may already exist among members our military community. If so, we might ask to have one or more of the troops perform with the Rhythm Road quartet in a special session on one of the days of their Kuwait tour that would demonstrate just how vibrant a contemporary art form this genre of music is.

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ITINERARY
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17. (U) The proposed itinerary follows:

-- Tuesday, January 27: Quartet arrives Kuwait.

-- Wednesday January 28: Practice jam session and/or alternating demonstrations with local musicians and possibly U.S. military performers or attendees, in the afternoon or evening.

-- Thursday, January 29 and Friday, January 30: Both evenings would be devoted to concerts at the Hawthorn Hotel dedicated to the memory of slain American journalist Daniel Pearl. We are also considering bringing the quartet to local high schools on one or both days, to conduct musical workshops and give a talk on their music.

-- Saturday, January 31: Quartet leaves Kuwait for next post.

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POST SUPPORT
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18. (U) Post is prepared to take an active role in the advertising, preparation, presentation, security and technical aspects of all the events associated with this program.

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A FINAL NOTE
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19. (U) Regardless of the musical genre of the next tour to this region, we are very eager to host the next "Rhythm Road" quartet.

JONES